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### HSUS Spotlights Circus Cruelty

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August, 1977

**NEWS SPOTLIGHTS**

**CIRCUS CRUELTY**

## Society Has Sideshow Operator Arrested in Three States

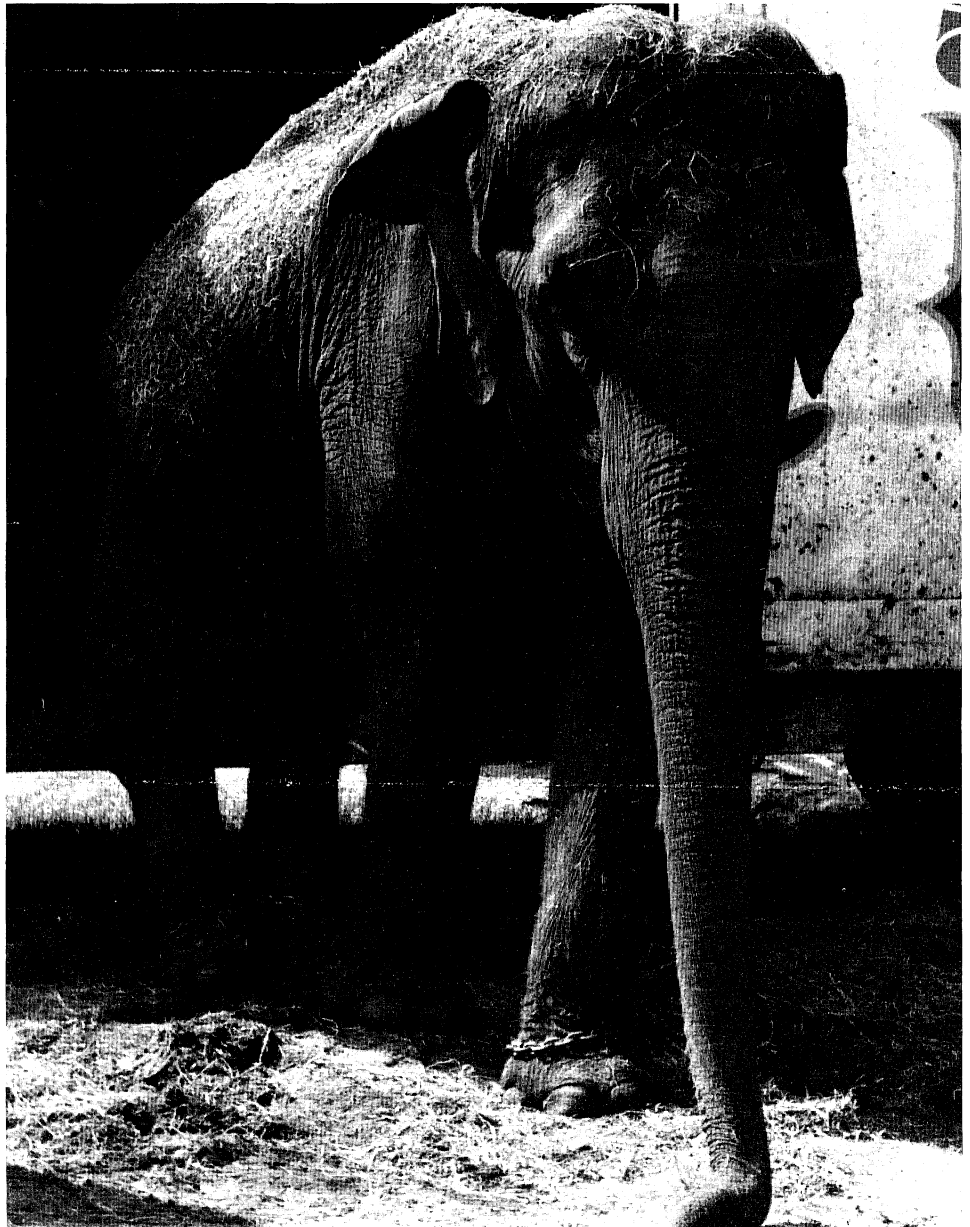
Who can deny the sense of excitement the young and the young-at-heart feel when the circus comes to town? The sounds, smells, and attractions create a fantasy world where everything is fun.

But is it all good clean fun? Evidence in recent years suggests quite the contrary. The worst problems seem to be with the smaller circuses. In the past year, The HSUS has assisted several local societies investigating cruelty to animals in traveling circuses, rescued elephants and lions abandoned by a circus, and signed three complaints against one of the largest of today's small big tops.

According to Frantz Dantzler, chief HSUS cruelty investigator, "The traveling circus of today is a poor imitation of the great circuses of the past. The tents are a little worse for wear. The paint is chipped. The music is a little off key, and the costumes need pressing. But worst of all—the animal exhibits are without doubt very, very cruel."

### 'They Might as Well be Stuffed'

In midsummer, HSUS investigators followed the Carson and Barnes Circus through Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Carson and Barnes claim to be "America's Largest Wild Animal Circus." During this four day jaunt, The HSUS signed complaints alleging violations of



### DISLOCATED HIP

Shirley suffered a dislocated hip when the truck she was being carried in turned over. Sue Pressman asked Fisher Bros. Circus to put Shirley to sleep but they refused. Pressman described Shirley as "tremendously thin and old".



**TV NEWS** Washington TV newsman interview HSUS's Phil Steward about the conditions at Carson and Barnes. Steward labeled the conditions as "cruel".

each state's anti-cruelty laws. Mr. William Shearer, the operator of "African Village", a primate exhibit, was arrested and released on bond in each state.

HSUS Investigator Phil Steward examined the animals and declared "They might as well be stuffed. They do nothing but sit or lie down and get stared at by the passing people." Steward said, "The unfortunate creatures were held in crudely made cages within a trailer truck. The paying customers passed down one side of the truck while the animals were exhibited on the other side. The ventilation, availability of water, and sanitation were very poor."

HSUS investigators were unable to impound the primates on exhibit with Carson and Barnes because they had no place to take them. All inquiries to find a suitable location were fruitless. Therefore it was decided to follow the circus and continue to sign complaints.

D. R. Miller, the owner of Carson and Barnes Circus was interviewed on TV about the arrests. "There's very few people in the humane society business that know too much about animals," he said. "They think they do probably, and they have a good cause. But really when they come down to it, they don't." HSUS's Frantz Dantzler was asked to react to this statement. "Our investigators are thorough," he said. "They have studied animals and they know the law. These circus exhibitors only know animals through the bars of a cage."

The state trooper who assisted in the arrest in Maryland filed the following observations about the primate exhibit: "I found at this time the situation with the

animals to be even worse than described. The stench of urine from the animals in the heat was almost unbearable. It felt about 100 degrees inside the trailer with the small fan at one end doing little to cool the van."

Within the confines of one trailer, Mr. Shearer keeps three chimpanzees, one orangutan (an endangered species), a spider monkey, and a gorilla (also endangered). "All of the animals are serving life sentences in this truck," said HSUS investigator Marc Paulhus. "They are kept captive in conditions which most people only associate with fiction. The customers learn nothing about the animals. All they get for their money is a dim view of an unhappy primate looking back at them with sad eyes."

HSUS's Sue Pressman was also part of the team that investigated Carson and Barnes. As part of her regular assignment to keep tabs on animals in entertainment, Pressman receives "The Circus Report", a newsletter for circus exhibitors, trainers, and performers. A recent edition of the Report made special mention of Pressman's activities. Entitled "Trouble Ahead", the article warned circuses about HSUS. "Circuses and animal trainers are in for some rough times if Sue Pressman, Director of Wildlife Protection for The Humane Society of the United States has anything to say about it. . . Her next Humane Society assignment? Operating as an undercover agent in a circus. . ."

"This article clearly shows that they know we're on to them," said Pressman. "And we are! We are determined to show these fly-by-night exhibitors and trainers

that they must obey the dictates of the federal Animal Welfare Act. We are going to uncover the sideshow shams and three ring abuses."

#### Animal Welfare Act Ignored

The HSUS called in The U.S. Department of Agriculture which is charged with the enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act. The USDA inspector agreed with HSUS that the circus was in violation of the law regulating the handling, care, and transportation of primates. But the inspector gave Mr. Shearer five weeks to remedy the situation.

Thus the circus can continue its tour without providing proper ventilation, caging, water, lighting, or any other standards which have been set up to protect the animals from abuse.

The law was designed by Congress to protect the animals but USDA inspectors are administering it as though it was written for the protection of exhibitors and trainers. This backward view of the law can be plainly seen in the following quote from "What Animal Exhibitors Should Know About Licensing and Registering Under the Animal Welfare Act," a USDA publication that is supposed to help exhibitors understand the law. Instead, it seems to help exhibitors get around the law.

**Question:** *From the exhibitor's point of view, what is the major advantage of being licensed or registered?*

**Answer:** *By posting the licensing or regis-*



**HOT** It was 102 degrees and this tiger at the Carson and Barnes Circus had no water. In addition, as a non-working cat, it's supposed to have two 4 x 8 cages to live in—not one. No other empty cages were available.



#### HIDDEN CRUELTY

exhibit owner. *tration certificate, the exhibitor can quickly establish that he operates under government standards whenever he is challenged about his treatment of animals.*

Obviously, many animal exhibitors must 've getting "challenged" about their treatment of animals. The law requires licensing and registration, yet this answer implies it is optional and the only reason one should do so is to protect one's self from accusations of maltreatment.

#### Cruelty is By-Product of Traveling Circus

By the very nature of the business, the small traveling circus moves by truck. They may strike the tents in one city in the evening, drive all night, and set up the tents in another city the next day. They may visit as many as 150 cities and conduct as many as 350 performances in one year.

Sometimes the circus is wholly owned. But, more often, each of the exhibits and acts is under contract for a "piece of the action," or a set fee.

There is very little opportunity for repair and maintenance, refurbishing, and general cleaning. This might be okay for the human performers. They live in modern, fully equipped air-conditioned mobile homes with all the comforts. Not so for the animals.

Most of the time, exhibit animals are placed in a cage when first purchased and they may never get out again. The concept of a "Winter Quarters" is a myth of the past too. It's usually just a post office box. Many of these boxes can be found in Oklahoma, Alabama, and Florida. The ex-

This is how the primate exhibit at Carson and Barnes Circus appeared from the outside. Hidden within the walls of this trailer are the cruel conditions which caused the arrest of the

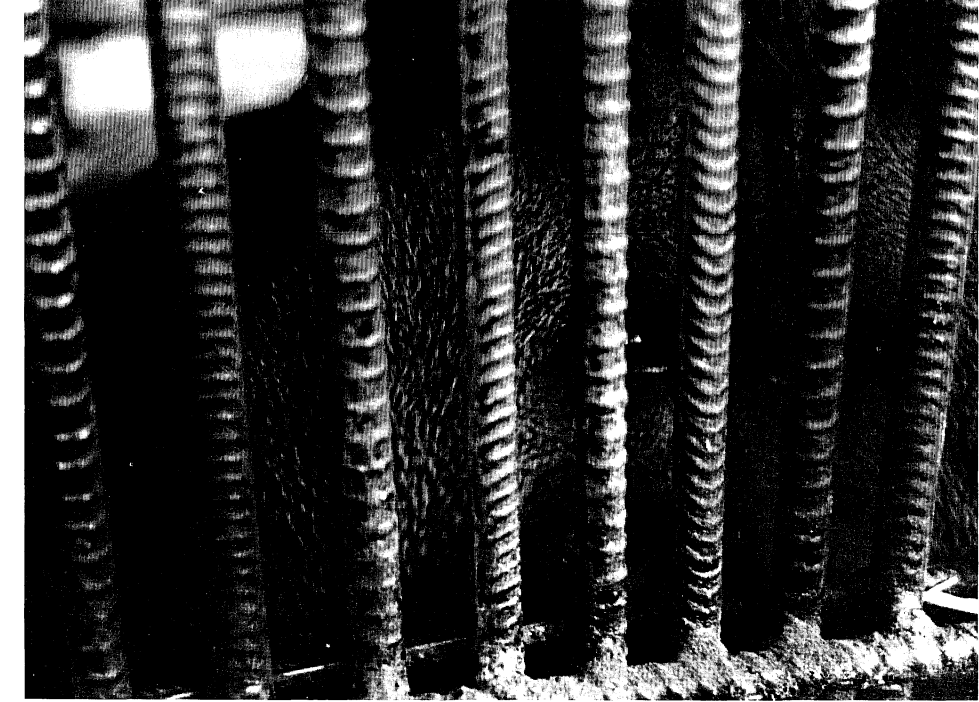
hibited animals never really get a rest. The animals are used like the batteries in a flashlight. When they are no longer able to perform, they are replaced.

The customers of the small circus are truly the "suckers" P. T. Barnum talked about. By paying to see the animal shows and exhibits, the customer is unknowingly helping to perpetuate this form of animal cruelty.

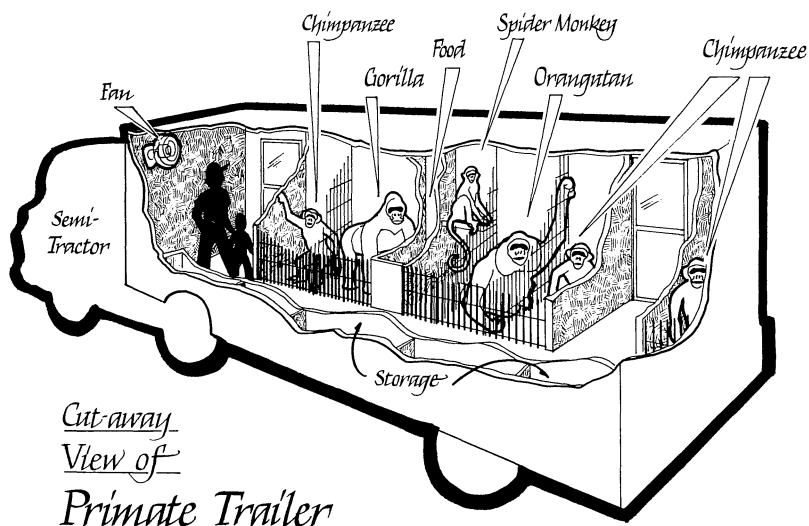
#### Elephants Abandoned

Last fall, Sue Pressman received a call from officials of Northeastern Ohio Animal Service. Three large elephants and a lion cub had been abandoned by a small circus, The George Mathews Great London Circus. Pressman flew to the scene and attended to the needs of the animals.

Pressman learned that the circus "had been having a bad year" and simply ran



**TROOPER'S STATEMENT** "The animals were in cages constructed of reinforcing rods, as several of them are dangerous. Furthermore, these bars are so close together it was hard to see the occupant of the cage. I could not see how water or food could be passed through the bars. . ."



This artist's view of the primate exhibit clearly illustrates the tight quarters in which these animals were kept. HSUS investigator Marc Paulhus described the van as "a prison on wheels".

out of funds to repair the elephant's truck and feed the animals.

Again, the USDA and local officials were called in. Through Pressman's insistence and financial help from his relatives, the circus owner (on his way back to California at the time) had the truck repaired and brought up to USDA standards. Pressman then arranged a permanent home for the animals.

In another incident this February, Pressman was summoned to Baltimore to handle a complaint against the Hannaford Circus. It was reported that elephants were injured and several tigers were living in very crowded conditions.

Pressman found the elephants in good shape. However she found four Siberian Tigers confined to one 4' x 8' "pull along" cage. (These are the cages the circus goes normally sees transporting the big cats to the show cage.)

Placing the four big cats in one cage was a clear violation of the Animal Welfare Act. Further, these cats were "not working" and the law requires each non-working cat be placed in two 4' x 8' cages whenever they are not performing.

Pressman found no empty cages that would allow the circus owner to meet the requirements of the law. Pressman informed the owner of the violation and at the circus' next stop in New Jersey, the owner had arranged for adequate caging.

HSUS believe special regulations aimed specifically at circus animals need to be developed by the USDA and the Department of the Interior. Apparently, Interior

has decided not to administer laws affecting endangered species when those animals are traveling with circuses even though they are charged by Congress with regulating all activities relating to endangered animals. Interior leaves all regulatory and enforcement activities relating to circuses up to the USDA.

#### Member Action Needed

HSUS President John A. Hoyt has called for maximum member participation in the small circus problem. In a recent address, Hoyt said, "We need everyone's help in this situation. Urge local authorities to check the circus when it comes to your town. Pay careful attention to how the animals are housed and cared for. Encourage animal welfare groups to sign complaints. The traveling circuses must be forced to end their cruel treatment of animals. Our children are being desensitized every time they see a gorilla crammed into a tiny cage. Soon, they will come to accept this as normal and acceptable. They must be taught to see the suffering. If we don't put an end to these traveling cruelties, we will all be affected."

Hoyt went on to point out that HSUS investigators will provide guidance and assistance whenever possible to those who uncover suffering animals. "Because these shows are constantly on the move," Hoyt said, "we must be vigilant and act quickly."

#### You Can Help

In order for HSUS investigators to follow these traveling circuses, and follow up

on complaints, your financial support is essential. This is only the beginning. We must compile a track record of successful complaints so that the small circus industry gets the message. Your dollars will enable staffers to travel, seek evidence, and press for convictions under existing laws.

Use the enclosed envelope to send your tax-deductible contribution today. There are thousands of animals living miserable lives confined in cruel cages, and ferried around the country like the goods of a door to door salesman. We must end these cruelties for the animals — and for us.



**FUN?** Humane Society investigators described the interior as "dark, airless, and crowded." It's no wonder these children aren't smiling!

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